

[Mrs. Amelia (Bolton) Church]

[Interview?]

Georgia B. Redfield

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Mrs. Church.

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MRS AMELIA (BOLTON) CHURCH

Selected by Committee of Chaves County Archaeological and Historical Society as one of the Four Outstanding Pioneer Builders of Roswell and Southeast New Mexico.

Mrs. Amelia (Bolton) Church - daughter of John Bolton, who was head of the Quartermaster Department stationed with army officers at Fort Stanton, New Mexico, for

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protection of the early settlers from Indians, and wife of the late J. P. Church, a pioneer builder of Roswell - has lived in Southeast New Mexico for sixty-seven years.

Native of Wexford Ireland

Mrs. Church was born in Wexford Ireland July 3, 1862. In 1871 she came from Ireland to America with her mother, Ella (Doyel) Bolton, and a brother and younger sister, who is Mrs. Ella (Bolton) Davidson. Mrs. Bolton and her children, on landing in New York, traveled by train as far as the railroad was built, and then by army ambulance and covered wagons, guarded by an army escort sent from Fort Stanton, by whom they were conducted safely thro'ugh hostile Indian infested plains to what was to be their new home in the wild newly settled country of New Mexico. C18 - 6/5/41- N. Mex.

Abode Home at Fort Stanton

Mr. Bolton had preceded his wife and children in coming to America. After they joined him at Fort Stanton he built for them a new adobe home. Here Mrs. Church lived happily with her parents and brother and sister the three first of her many continuous years of residence in New Mexico.

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In 1873 John Bolton moved his family to the historic old town of Lincoln, New Mexico, where he was made postmaster. Here his daughters, Amelia and Ella grew to young girlhood, constantly surrounded by danger, not only from Indians, of whom they had lived in terror at Fort Stanton, but from the rough element of settlers of the new town, made up of cattle thieves, gamblers and murderers, and the gun-battles of the two factions of the bloody feudal conflicts, known as the Lincoln County War. The true stories of some of tho'se battles - of which Mrs. Church is one of the few living eye-witnesses - and the traditions of the many historic places of interest in Lincoln County are desired by the

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Chaves County Archaeological and Historical Society for preservation in the Roswell Museum.

[Beginning of Lincoln County War

The killing of John H. Tunstall on February 18, 1878 was the real beginning of the Lincoln County War. Tunstall, who was a popular young Englishman, had established a ranch on the Rio Feliz and stocked it with cattle and horses. William Bonney, who became known afterwards as "Billy the Kid, and as a bloodthirsty man-killer and outlaw", was employed by Tunstall to assist with the stock on the ranch. They became fast friends. The youthful outlaw made a resolve, while standing over the grave of his friend, that he would never let up until he killed the last man who helped to kill Tunstall. Tunstall was shot down by officials of the law, who were sent to take Tunstall's cattle and property because of his partnership with McSween in the mercantile business in Lincoln. Sheriff Brady was supposed to have been responsible for the attachment?] [Coe, Garretts and Fultons versions not quoted Omitted by request Mrs Church who wants to write a book on this subject she does not agree on this version any way of [???] 3 [issued against Tunstall's property, which resulted in his killing.?)

[Killing of Major Brady Spring of 1878

"I knew Major Brady very well." Said Mrs. Church during an interview at her home in Roswell in September, 1938.?) Omitted

["He was sheriff of Lincoln County when he was killed. I saw him as he and another man, deputy sheriff George Hindman, lay dead in the street, shot down, as they were passing, by Billy the Kid and his gang, who lay hidden behind an adobe wall. Major Brady was killed instantly. George Hindman fell when he was shot, and Ike Stockton who was standing near, on seeing he was still alive, ran to him and gave him water that he brought from a ditch in his hat. However nothing could revive him for he was mortally wounded and died in

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a few minutes. The third man, Billy Mathews, who was with Major Brady when the shooting began, made his escape by running into an adobe house near by."

Old Lincoln County Court House

"Up stairs in the old Court House at Lincoln is the room where Billy the Kid was confined waiting his trial for the killing of Major Brady. There have been many untrue stories told of the Kid's sensational escape after killing his two guards Bell and Ollinger. I remember all the facts in connection with that escape," said Mrs. Church.?) Omitted

[Billy the Kid, was playing cards with Bell, while Ollinger, his other guard, was at dinner across the street, he saw his chance and grabbed Bell's gun. Bell darted down the inside stairway, but Billy the Kid was too quick for him, fired and Bell fell dead at the bottom of the stairs. Billy the Kid then walked calmly to a window and shot Ollinger down as he came running when he heard the?) 4 [shooting. The "Kid" then threw the gun on Ollinger who lay dying and told Goss, the jail cook, to saddle a horse that was feeding in an alfalfa field near by. The cook helped get the shackles off the Kid's hands but, because they were welded on he couldn't get them off his legs that is why he was thro'wn from the horse because of having to ride side-wise on account of the shackles. He rode a mile and a half west before they were removed by a Mexican man, who afterwards gave the shackles to George Titsworth, who lived at Capitan, and possessed an interesting collection at that place."?) Omitted

["The Old Court House is now in process of reconditioning and strengthening. It is to serve as a memorial to the pioneers after its restoration."?)

El Torreon - Old Stone Tower

In 1935, Mrs. Church worked untiringly with the Chaves County Archaeological and Historical Society in the securing and restoration of El Torreon the old round stone tower, built by Mexican settlers around 1840 or 1850, at La Placita - later named Lincoln. The

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tower was first built to be used as a look out and protection against Indians. It served in later years as a place of refuge from white outlaws and as a refuge during the Lincoln County war.

"I was interested in saving the old tower that was fast crumbling into ruins," said 'Mrs. Church, "because we felt safer all thro'ugh tho'se dangerous years of outlawry just knowing there was always a place of safety to be found behind its protecting walls. It helped keep us brave at times when we needed courage."

"My sister Ella and my mother and I were the only white persons of twenty seven - the rest were all Mexicans - who spent the night crowded together in El Torreon after we had been warned to seek 5 safety in the tower, for the dreaded Horrell brothers, outlaw murderers, were on their way to wipe out the town. There had been seven of the Horrell brothers. [?? not known?] Two had been killed at a [baile?] (dance) after the younger one of the brothers had started a quarrel over a Spanish senorita. This threatened invasion was suppose to be for the purpose of carrying out their threat to kill every man, woman, and child in revenge for the shooting of their brothers. We spent the night in fear and trembling, close by the side of our mother, but morning found us quite safe in the old tower. The Horrells had accepted some kind of a truce offered by a friend. They were notified for the time being and no one at all was harmed."

"I know now," said Mrs. Church, "that our mother who possessed a brave and dauntless spirit and never complained during tho'se dangerous times must have often longed for the peaceful security of her old home in Ireland."

[The First Jail Built in Lincoln

Mrs. Church remembers the building of the first jail in Lincoln, the first occupant of which was Billy the Kid.?) Mrs Church wants to use this in book. Omitted by her request

["I watched the men as they worked on the jail." Said Mrs. Church. "They dug a square pit about nine feet deep, then they lowered into it, a rough closet like cell witho'ut any doors or windows. On top of the ground, over the cell they built a two room adobe house for the jailer. I saw them lower Billy the Kid thro'ugh a trap door in the top to the cell below. There was a ditch running full of water close by. I was horrified when I heard one of the men who lowered the "Kid" inside say: 'Let's turn the water of that ditch into the cell and drown him like a cat.'"?]

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Knew Billy the Kid and McSweens

While many harrowing experiences and murderings were indeliably impressed upon the young mind of Mrs. Church. [???] She also remembers many pleasant social occasions during the years she lived in Lincoln. There were musicale parties and dancing. She knew Billy the Kid who sang well and was a good dancer. He was a welcome guest at many of the [early?] social affairs of the town. She often visited in the home of Mr. and Mrs. McSween. Mr. McSween tho'ugh he never carried a gun, was one of the faction leaders of the Lincoln County War. She remembers Mrs. McSween as being a woman of refinement and culture. She was a good musician and owned a fine piano of which she was very proud. It was burned in her home, the night her husband was killed in the final battle that practically ended the Lincoln County War which took place in July 1878. Omitted

Married to Joshua P. Church

Mrs. Church was married July 18, 1891 to Joshua P. Church then of Roswell who had been a resident of Southeast New Mexico since the spring of 1880. Children born to this union were Sophia (Mrs. L. L. Ochanpaugh, who lived in Roswell) Joshua (a son, who lives in Deming, New Mexico) Aileen (Mrs. Langford Keith, who lives in Roswell) and Elinor (Mrs. Richard M. Harrison, who lives in Nogalis, Arizona).

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Old Pauly Hotel

The first home occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Church, after their marriage, was the old Pauly Hotel which was the first real hotel built in Roswell. They purchased the interest and holdings in the building from Mrs. Aileen O'neal who had conducted the hotel for the first six months after its construction in 1890.

After living in the hotel four years Mr. and Mrs. Church built 7 the home where Mrs. Church lives at the present time at what is now 210 South Kentucky Avenue, and where the death of Mr. Church occurred in 1917.

Mrs. Church is one of the popular leaders of the social life of Roswell. She belongs to the Episcopalian Church, and is a member of the Roswell Woman's Club, of the Southwestern History Club, and Chaves County Archaeological and Historical Society, to which she has contributed much of her valuable time in the building of the Roswell Museum and the progress of its cultural development that is proving invaluable to the people of Roswell. The beautiful Pueblo style building designed by Frank Blandhardt Roswell architect. "Dedicated to the Founders and Builders of Roswell" is the culmination of the ideas of Mrs. C. D. Bonney and Mrs. Church, who first entertained the thoughts of building a suitable place to house the splendid archaeological collection owned by the society. It was completed as a W. P. A. Project in [1837?].

In the selection of Mrs. Church, by the committee of the society, as one of the four outstanding pioneer builders of Southwest New Mexico, of whom a bust was to be sculptured for the Roswell Museum, she was justly honored, above all the women contributors to the up-building and advancement of what was an undeveloped new section of the territory not so many years ago.

The life like heads modeled of Mrs. Church, John Chisum, Captain Joseph C. Lea and James J. Hagerman, the work of John Raymond Tirkin a Santa Fe sculptor, were done

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under the W. P. A. Federal Art Project of New Mexico. They have been placed in [?] especially designed for them built, shrine-like, in the four corners of the foyer of the museum. Here they will be safe and serve to perpetuate the memory of, not only Mrs. Church, but all the pioneer wives and mothers for whom she stands, and not only of the three pioneer men, associated with Mrs. Church as builders, but all those pioneers for whom their sculptured heads stand as symbols, who were contributors in the development and cultural advancement of a new civilization in the country of Southeast New Mexico.

Mrs. Church has ever been interested in, the welfare of the poorer class of people and has worked ceaselessly through the years to improve and broaden the lives of those less fortunate in educational advantages and beautiful surroundings. Gardening is her hobby. She is widely known because of her civic pride and achievements in developing beauty-spots, in which trees and lovely lawns and flowers now flourish, where in the early days she saw only salt grass, mesquite and weeds grow in profusion.

Mrs. Church and her family are appreciated and stand high in the regard of the Roswell people.